

celebration of their waterways, and to facilitate ways to make our waterway environments healthy, safe, and accessible for future generations.

In my own State of Nevada, which is erroneously thought of as being just a desert State, the marinas at Lake Mead and along the Colorado River provide hundreds of thousands of people, not just the opportunity to relax and enjoy their vacations, but the opportunity to take a trip in time, from the ancient canyon walls of the Colorado River to the twentieth century wonder of the Hoover Dam complex, to the exciting resort community of Laughlin, Nevada.

I recently wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Interior asking her to support improvements to the boat ramps and adjacent facilities on Lake Mead to attract more users to this magnificent body of water.

I am pleased to be the sponsor of this bipartisan resolution, and look forward to its passage by this House. I urge all my colleagues to lend it their support.

GREEK-TURKISH COOPERATION

HON. DOUG BEREUTER

OF NEBRASKA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 25, 2003

Mr. BEREUTER. Mr. Speaker, this Member rises to commend the governments of Greece and Turkey for the agreement that they have reached on confidence-building between their armed forces.

On Wednesday, Lord Robertson, the Secretary General of NATO, announced that the two NATO member countries have reached agreements on cooperation between their national defense colleges and on exchanges of military personnel for training purposes.

This Member is pleased to note that the talks between the two countries are expected to continue, with the aim of reaching further confidence-building measures.

Mr. Speaker, this Member commends Secretary General Robertson and the Greek and Turkish governments for this initiative.

CONSTANTINO BRUMIDI'S BICENTENNIAL IN 2005

HON. JOHN L. MICA

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 25, 2003

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, today, on Constantino Brumidi's 198th birthday, I have introduced a resolution which will honor, in conjunction with his bicentennial in 2005, the life and work of this Italian immigrant who spent 25 years painting, decorating and making beautiful the United States Capitol.

In January of 2005, the Capitol Visitor Center is scheduled to open, marking the largest expansion ever to the United States Capitol. I am introducing this resolution now in order to have time to coincide what will be a momentous occasion with the 200th anniversary of Brumidi's birth. Mr. Speaker, I believe it is fitting that we celebrate the opening of the CVC while concurrently honoring the man who sacrificed so much to adorn this very building with such beauty.

Constantino Brumidi was born almost 200 years ago in Italy and lived there until 1850, working as an artist in Rome and the Vatican where he had many commissions, including a famous portrait of Pope Pius IX. In 1852, due to political upheavals in Rome, Brumidi immigrated to the United States and immediately applied for citizenship. From then on, he dedicated the rest of his life to making the United States Capitol one of the most impressive structures in our great Nation.

In 1865, Brumidi spent 11 months dangerously high atop the Capitol Rotunda laboring on his masterpiece, "The Apotheosis of Washington," in the eye of the Capitol dome. Six years later he created the first tribute to an African-American in the Capitol when he placed the figure of Crispus Attucks at the center of his painting of the Boston Massacre. And in 1878, at the age of 72 and in poor health, Brumidi began work on the Rotunda frieze, which chronicles the history of the United States.

Constantino Brumidi's life and work exemplifies the lives of millions of immigrants who came to the United States, who came here to escape adverse conditions in their native lands, who through their skills and hard work bettered their lives and the lives of their children, while immensely enriching the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I urge prompt consideration of this resolution.

OFFSET OF FEDERAL TAX RE- FUNDS FOR STATE AND LOCAL TAX DEBTS

HON. JAMES P. MORAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 25, 2003

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to be introducing legislation that would establish federal tax refund offset program for state and local governments. Specifically, this program would require the federal government to withhold refunds from those individuals and corporations that still owe state or local government tax obligations.

Today, the reverse situation exists. A number of states allow their own state agencies, local governments and the Internal Revenue Service to submit a list of delinquent taxpayers. The state then matches these delinquent accounts against taxpayers who may qualify for a state tax refund. If a match is found, the state reduces the refund by the amount of the delinquency and remits the funds to the claimant. These programs have proven to be low-cost and highly effective. Congress recognized the effectiveness of these programs and directed the Internal Revenue Service to establish a similar program to cover claims by other federal agencies, as well as for past-due child support obligations. In 2000, Congress expanded the program by directing the Treasury Department to accept claims by states for income tax obligations.

The legislation I am introducing today builds on these successful programs by permitting local governments to participate. The local governments could submit their outstanding tax debts to the Department of the Treasury for an offset against any federal tax refund, just as federal agencies and states do now.

This legislation would also permit a claim to be made for any legally enforceable tax obligation owed to the state or local government.

In an era of tight state and local government budgets, it is patently unfair to have the tax-paying citizenry bear the costs and burdens of those who do not pay their fair share. As President Kennedy recognized, "[t]o the extent that some people are dishonest or careless in their dealings with the government, the majority is forced to carry a heavier tax burden." (April 20, 1961) The legislation that I am introducing today will provide a means to help distribute that burden more equitably.

I urge my colleagues to support it.

PHARMACEUTICAL MARKET ACCESS ACT OF 2003

SPEECH OF

HON. BOB ETHERIDGE

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 24, 2003

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight in opposition to H.R. 2427, the so-called Pharmaceutical Market Access Act.

The high cost of prescription medicines is one of the most serious issues facing our seniors. Proponents of H.R. 2427 claim that if we would simply open our borders to medicines that are imported from other countries our problem would be solved. Unfortunately, the solution is not that easy.

I have consistently voted against unsafe importation measures because they subject consumers to medicines that may have been altered or are cheap imitations of medicines approved by the Food and Drug Administration. The bill before us seriously threatens the safety of U.S. consumers; therefore, I will vote against it.

Safety is the ultimate issue in this debate. H.R. 2427 would allow for the importation of prescription medicines from other countries without any assurance that those medicines are safe. The 106th Congress enacted legislation that would allow importation but only if the Secretary of Health and Human Services certifies those medicines are safe. But neither former Secretary Shalala nor Secretary Thompson has been able to do this. The Canadian government also recently stated that it cannot and will not assure the safety of the medicines exported to the U.S. Additionally, consumers will not be able to depend on their local pharmacies to screen their medicines. Importing medicines from foreign countries is the wrong prescription for America.

There are other ways to help lower the costs of medicines. Together Rx is an initiative developed by seven of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies to provide seniors and other eligible Medicare patients with access to savings on over 170 medicines using just one discount card. The card is free and requires patients to merely fill out an easy-to-understand registration form to qualify. Once approved for Together Rx, patients may fill their prescriptions at any pharmacy they choose and get a discount immediately at the register. This initiative, which is honored at almost every pharmacy in the U.S., has already saved nearly one million Medicare patients almost \$100 million since its inception.

Instead of supporting risky plans like importation, we should encourage seniors to take